

Realize

**Jeanine Finch**

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**From:** Kathryn McKissick <kmckissick@rosslynva.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 02, 2015 12:01 PM  
**To:** Mary Hynes; Libby Garvey; John Vihstadt; Walter Tejada; Jay Fisette  
**Cc:** CountyManager; Barbara Donnellan; Bob Duffy; Brian Harner (labhome@bellatlantic.net); Peter N. Greenwald; Lucia deCordre  
**Subject:** Rosslyn BID Realize Rosslyn Sector Plan Update - letter  
**Attachments:** RBID\_Realize Rosslyn Sector Plan Update\_Rosslyn BID.pdf

Rosslyn

**Dear Madam Chair and Members of the County Board,**

**Please find the attached letter from the Rosslyn Business Improvement Corporation in preparation for your Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, working session on the Realize Rosslyn Sector Plan Update.**

**We appreciate your attention.**

**Best,**

**Mary-Claire Burick, President**



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Mary Hynes  
Arlington County Board Chair  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington, Va. 22201

March 2, 2015

RE: Realize Rosslyn Sector Plan Update

Dear Mrs. Hynes:

The Rosslyn Business Improvement Corporation appreciates the tireless effort which the County Manager and staff have put into the Realize Rosslyn Sector Plan Update. The result to date has been a set of guiding principles endorsed by the full range of stakeholders: residents, civic groups, developers, property owners as well as the County Board. However, there are issues that remain unresolved and are of concern to our stakeholders. We wanted to share them with you before the March 4th working session.

Guiding Principles Should Provide Direction

The County Board has approved a Framework that provides over-arching principles for development which have been agreed to with enthusiasm by the community. The proposals for implementing these principles, however, are prescriptive and unsupportable to most Rosslyn property owners. The proposed site by site limitations for Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and height are particularly concerning. A 10.0 FAR is currently achievable in C-O Rosslyn through the Site Plan Process. The proposed average of 9.2 FAR is a step backward.

Development sites *guided* by the adopted Framework and by the intent of the planning principles will achieve a well-designed and coherent urban community for residents and businesses alike. Critical development variables such as height and FAR must be allowed full and fair consideration through the County's Site Plan Review Process (SPRC) and should not be pre-determined. A thorough study of the height and massing of each site, reviewed in the context of proposed use, site and building design, would likely yield beneficial results. The prescriptive approach limits opportunities and restricts realization of the full potential for Rosslyn's continued development. We encourage all of us to embrace the guiding principles and establish a process for key stakeholders to make their case for a workable solution that is economically viable for the County and does not result in lost revenue as the proposed plan will.

Plan Must Consider Economics

Rosslyn needs a plan that can be supported and obtain the buy-in of the community in order to be effective; it must engender, rather than curtail, tax revenue. Artificially limited FAR dramatically reduces tax revenues and constituent-desired benefits in proportion to the amount of FAR reduction in each development. Further, these limitations threaten to reduce Rosslyn's competitive edge as the area's premier urban center and its unique regional identity.

Rosslyn's location, context, and redevelopment potential are amazing assets to Arlington County. The Realize Rosslyn Sector Plan Update is a critical document which can either provide tools to encourage Rosslyn's full potential, or set limitations for its success. We ask that before a plan is implemented you consider the importance of getting the direction of the document right and obtaining the support of the community. We urge that you consider encouraging additional input, including a meaningful evaluation of the economic impacts to the County and its residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "mcburick".

Mary-Claire Burick, President, Rosslyn Business Improvement Corporation

Weissberg Corp.

An investment company.

COUNTY BOARD OFFICE  
RECEIVED

2015 FEB 25 P 1:31

February 24, 2015

**RE: Rosslyn Sector Plan Addendum**

Dear Board Chair Hynes:

The undersigned is the owner of 1901 North Moore Street, known as the RCA Building. The site's prominent location welcomes visitors from the District into Arlington and, as has been recognized, demands a signature architectural structure as a beacon for visitors to Rosslyn. The site's small area and significant grade changes require flexibility to allow a building of this caliber to be developed.

**Heights**

In its recommendations on the Rosslyn Sector Plan Addendum, staff has chosen this site as a "valley", with a recommended height of 260'; however, this recommendation does not follow the criteria for determining "peaks and valleys" set forth by the County Board. In April, 2014, the County Board adopted the Rosslyn Plan Framework, and this document outlines the criteria by which height recommendations should be made (see Exhibit A). **Using the criteria the Board adopted in the Framework, there is no basis for any recommendation of a height at lower than 300 feet for the RCA Building site.** These criteria are listed below:

- 1. Preserve Priority View Corridors from Observation Deck** - The Observation Deck will be located at a height of 388', and the Central Place residential tower, at a height of 352', will stand between the RCA Building site and the Observation Deck. Given this, even at a height of 300', a redeveloped RCA Building would have no impact on views from the Observation Deck. A rendering showing a 300' building is attached as Exhibit B. At this height, and including a grade differential of approximately 12', a redeveloped RCA building at 300' will appear a full 100' lower than the Observation Deck.
- 2. Good Views From and Daylight Access to Buildings** - The heights and orientations of the buildings neighboring the RCA Building site mean that, even at 300', a redeveloped building would have no impact on views from other private buildings. Exhibit C illustrates this lack of impact on views.
- 3. Distinctive Skyline** – Permitting development up to 300' permits greater variety in architectural form, allowing a building that will meet the Framework's call for visual distinction in the skyline at this prominent site. On the other hand, reducing potential height will result in a more "boxy" and less distinctive structure. As stated, even at a height of 300' a building at this site will be significantly lower than the Central Place buildings to the south. Further, the slim profile of the RCA Building facing north/south (at a width of only about 86') will contrast favorably with nearby 300' tall buildings, which will be oriented east/west with broad building faces directed north/south. The dramatic grade change moving east to west also contributes to a more varied skyline: even if buildings have the same height above the average elevation of the site, the appearance of their height will vary significantly.

**4. Marketable Floor plates/Flexibility of Use** – Providing greater heights creates more flexibility in potential floorplate design, which will allow the site to be suitable for a wider variety of uses than if heights were constrained to something less than 300’.

**5. Sensitive Edge Transitions, Ground Level View Corridors, Sun/Shade Opportunities, Open Space and Circulation** – These items would not be impacted by a 300’ RCA Building.

Rather than analyzing these adopted criteria to recommend heights for the RCA Building site, staff has merely reviewed the site area for this building and determined that a marketable density can be achieved with a height less than 300’. See Exhibit D for examples of this process. **Determining that reduced heights should exist merely because a site’s buildable area can support a marketable density at a reduced height is not purposeful planning and is not consistent with the adopted framework.**

**Parking**

Parking policy in Rosslyn has frequently recognized the challenging geology in the area and permitted parking to be located above grade, without penalizing property owners by “counting” above grade parking as part of the building’s total maximum gross floor area.

In its recommendations related to the Sector Plan Addendum, however, staff has deviated from this practice, stating that the recommendations for maximum density at redevelopment sites are inclusive of any above-grade parking. Given the current economic climate, it is the wrong time to recommend reversal of a practice developed in response to physical and economic hardships.

**Conclusion**

To summarize the foregoing, we request that **(1) the recommended height for the RCA Building site not be reduced from the maximum 300 feet currently permitted by CO-Rosslyn and (2) that above-grade parking not be counted toward a building’s maximum gross floor area.**

The Weissberg family has been a property owner and corporate citizen in Arlington County for decades, and throughout that time we have participated in a number of visioning processes for Rosslyn. Some of these processes have been effective, while others have not. We encourage the Board to make this a successful process by continuing its tradition of purposeful planning and adhering to the principles set forth in the Framework Plan in making its decisions on the Sector Plan Addendum.

We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Nina Weissberg

# **EXHIBIT A**

## 2. Building Height and Form Realize Rosslyn Background

Develop a **new building heights policy** and **regulatory framework** for Central Rosslyn that incorporates **varied building heights** across the district and **advances the following principles** more effectively than the current general taper policy:

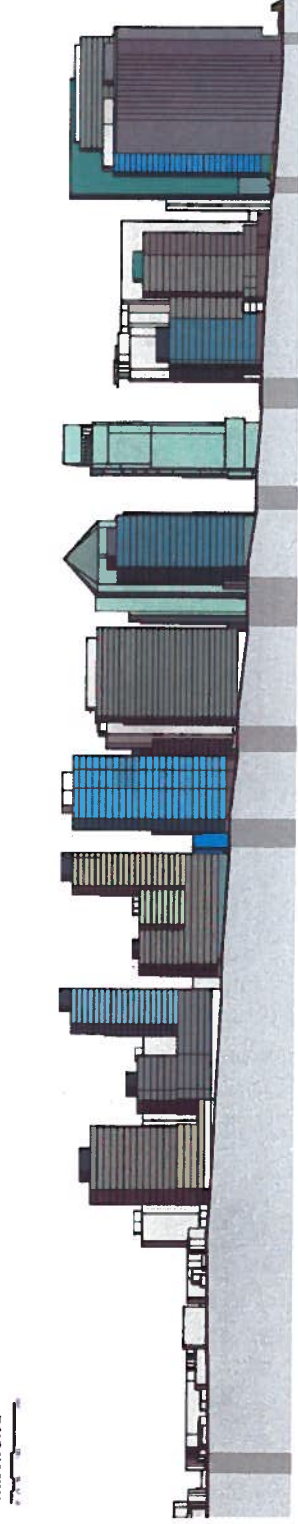
- Sensitive Edge Transitions
- Priority View Corridors from Observation Deck
- Good Views from All Buildings
- Good Daylight Access to Buildings
- Ground Level View Corridors
- Balanced Sun/Shade Opportunities
- Great Open Space and Circulation at grade
- Marketable floorplates/buildings and flexibility on use
- Distinctive Skyline

*(excerpted from the [Rosslyn Plan Framework, April 2014](#))*



## BUILDING HEIGHT AND FORM

Wilson Blvd

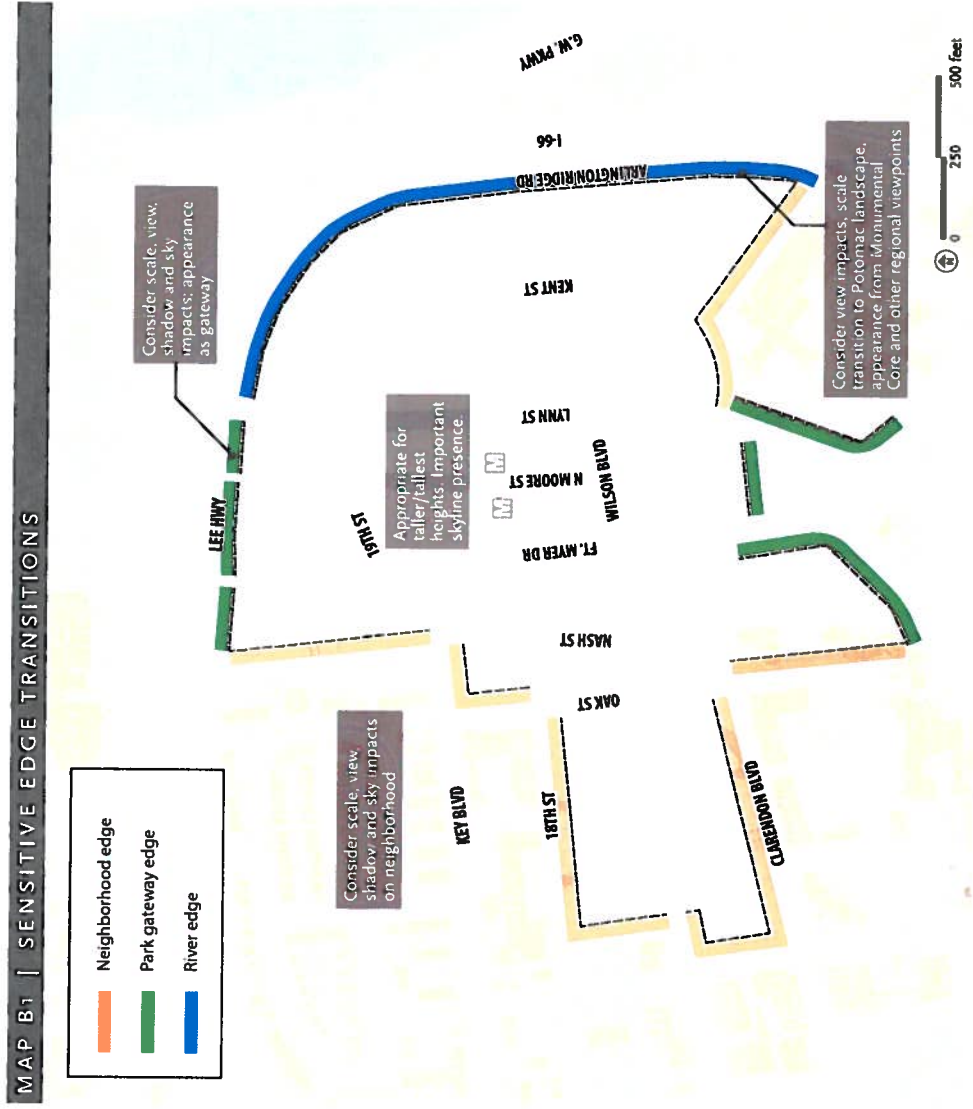


The Building Height and Form Policy Directives for the Rosslyn Sector Plan Update focus on redefining the overall building heights policy in central Rosslyn to encourage development that can simultaneously achieve great public spaces, views and view corridors, light and air between buildings, sensitive transitions, and a distinctive and dynamic skyline. The directives establish a foundation for developing a building form and heights framework that can optimize how new buildings in Rosslyn meet a wide range of performance criteria, compared with the existing “Taper” policy and the challenges of applying that policy with positive results throughout the district. This new policy will lead to a framework that includes a variety of building heights and a dynamic skyline, with great open spaces created and defined by the buildings that frame them. This framework will also aim to enhance Rosslyn’s market position as a place attracting investment in high-value real estate and economic development. Working from the directives that follow, a new heights plan and other detailed dimensional design guidelines as needed will be developed for central Rosslyn and incorporated into the final Rosslyn Sector Plan Update.

**Building Height and Form Theme 1:** Updating the overarching building heights policy and regulatory framework for Rosslyn to create better public streets, open spaces, and architecture.

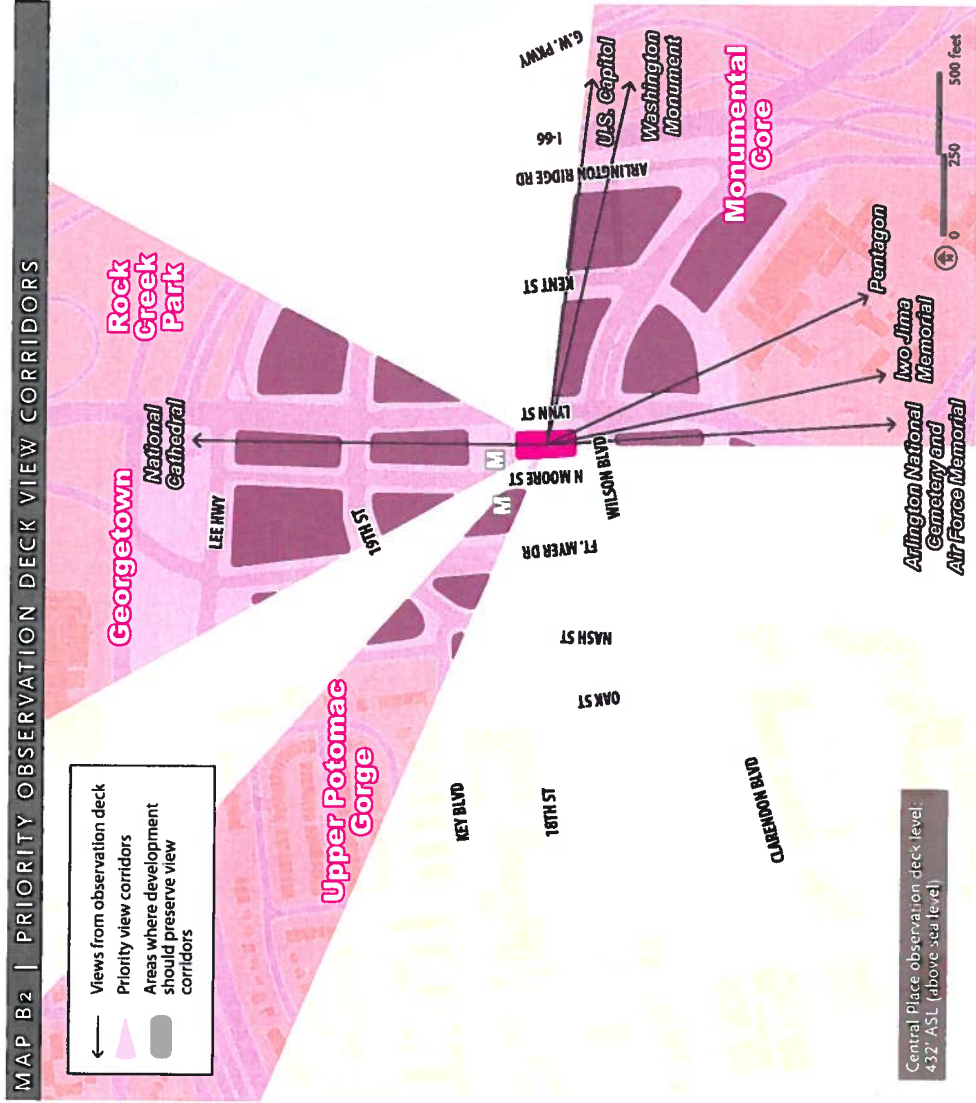
**B1** Develop a new building heights policy and regulatory framework for Central Rosslyn that incorporates varied building heights across the district and advances the following principles more effectively than the current general taper policy:

**B1.a** Recognize distinct priority transition and special context zones and apply form and massing strategies (such as lowered building heights, open space, and building setbacks) that ensure compatibility with and respect these sensitive edge conditions, as identified in Map B1 (*Sensitive Edge Transitions*).





**B1.b** Manage building heights to protect and enhance high-priority public observation deck view corridors (as depicted in Map B2, *Priority Observation Deck View Corridors*), promote good views from, and daylight access to, private buildings, and still achieve appropriate and sensitive transitions between the RCRD and surrounding areas.

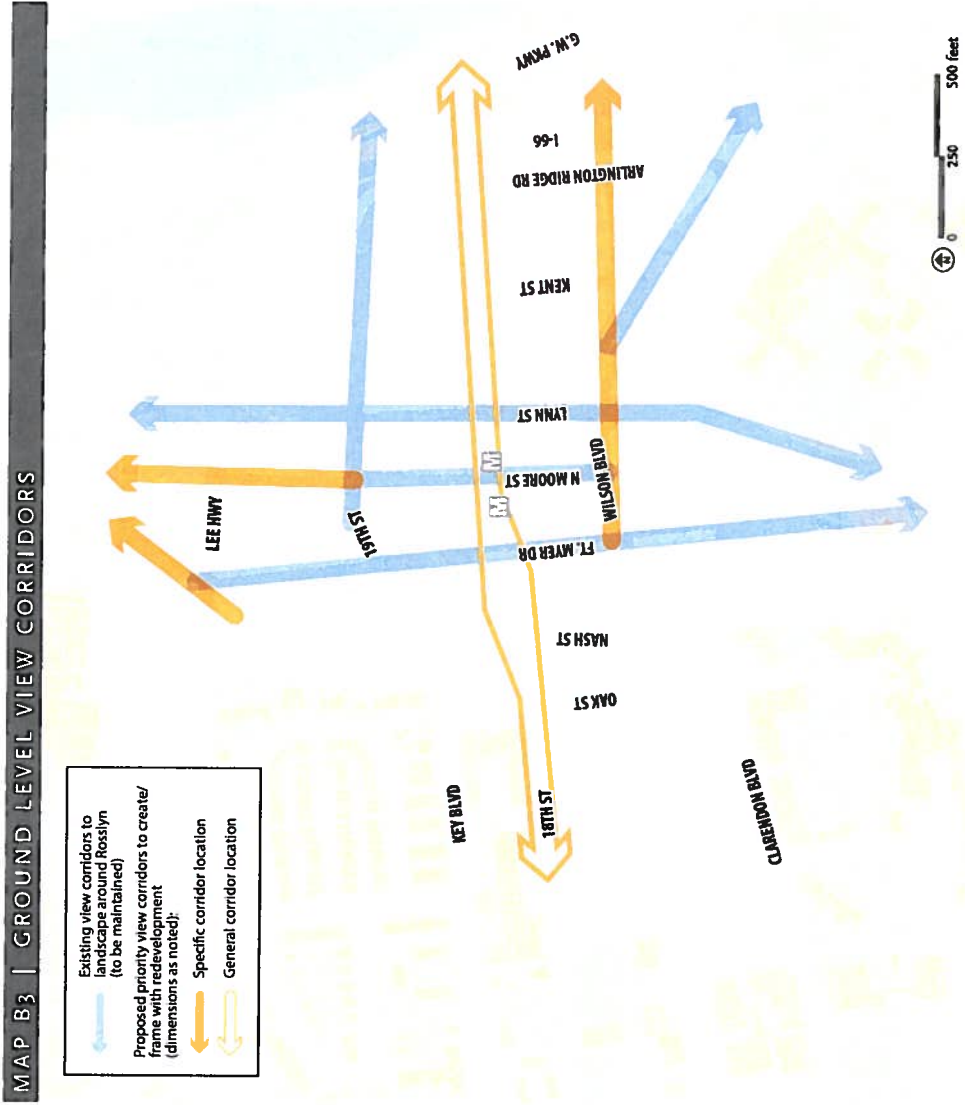


**B1.c** Protect and enhance high-priority ground level view corridors, as shown on Map B3 (*Priority Ground Level View Corridors*).

**B1.d** Develop strategies to balance sun and shade opportunities benefiting building occupants and users or parks and open spaces.

**B1.e** Leverage opportunities presented by the form of new development in Rosslyn to create great public open spaces and additional ground level circulation.

**B1.f** Provide for building floorplate sizes, proportions, and configurations that will yield marketable buildings and provide flexibility for multiple use options.



- B2** Make Rosslyn's architecture more distinctive and better oriented to people by encouraging more varied façades and massing across a range of scales, and adding distinction to building tops and the overall Rosslyn skyline.
  
- B3** Clearly identify, prioritize, and link future public improvements needed to advance and implement the vision of this Sector Plan Update to the attainment of increased site plan density above 3.8 FAR/4.8 FAR and corresponding building heights.

cc: Anthony Fusarelli



March 3, 2015

Mary Hughes Hynes, Chairman  
Arlington County Board  
3100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Re: County Board Work Session on Wednesday, March 4, 2015  
Realize Rosslyn

Dear Chairman Hynes,

In advance of the County Board Work Session on Wednesday, March 4, 2015, to discuss Realize Rosslyn, Monday Properties appreciates the opportunity to provide you with our input. Under separate cover, in a letter dated February 1, 2015, we provided Staff with our extensive analysis and comments based upon our architect's, Shalom Baranes', analysis of the height and massing studies as they apply to our three studied sites. This letter provides a brief synopsis for the County Board's benefit.

From the outset, I want to emphasize to the County Board how successful the Realize Rosslyn Plan effort has been to date. The initial elements of the Plan, which included the Rosslyn Plan Framework and two initial critical study topics, namely, transportation (Rosslyn Multimodal Transportation Study) and Public Parks and Open Space, were successful in all regards. The current element being studied, Building Height and Form, is, of course, the fundamental element that can promote or, in some cases, not promote the continued economic success of Rosslyn. Therefore, as the largest stakeholder in Rosslyn in terms of real estate ownership, please consider our comments in a positive and constructive context.

We would respectfully request the County Board to consider the following questions, as the County Board discusses and provides guidance with regard to the Realize Rosslyn Study and in particular, the Building Height and Form approach contained in the most recent draft (the "Study").

1090 Wilson Boulevard  
Suite 700  
Arlington VA 22209  
Tel 703-284-0200  
[www.mondayre.com](http://www.mondayre.com)

**1. Has the Study considered the site specific and collective loss of community benefit dollars associated with the proposed reduction in density over a redevelopment cycle?**

*We took the opportunity to calculate the loss of community benefit dollars associated with three of our sites that are part of the Study, namely the Key and Berkley Buildings, the Art Associates Buildings and the Gannett Foundation Building. The loss in community benefit dollars is \$50 million.*

**2. Has the Study considered the site specific and collective loss of tax dollars associated with the proposed reduction in density associated with the next generation of C-O-Rosslyn applications?**

*We took the opportunity to calculate the loss of tax dollars associated with the three Monday Properties' sites; the tax dollar loss over a 30 year period is \$100 million.*

**3. Does the Study's building height and form approach incentivizing redevelopment?**

*By way of example, as to the Art Associates Buildings, comparing the height and density proposed in the Study to the existing buildings, the density differential is so limited that there is no incentive to redevelop the site. As such, the loss of density is substantially more than reflected in the Study.*

**4. Does the Study's building height and form approach reflect realistic market driven floor plates?**

*By way of example, as to the Gannett Foundation Building, the height proposed in the Study combined with realistic floor plates results in only a 7.9 FAR. So, the economic impact of the Study may be far greater than reflected in the massing studies provided therein.*

**5. Does the outcome of the Study's building height and form approach result in some properties achieving higher densities and heights than others --- that is, are there winners and losers?**

*Although the most recent draft of the Study recites an average achieved density for the studied sites of a 9.2 FAR, the prior drafts provided the site by site FARs supporting that average, which varied greatly, resulting in some sites with substantially less height and density than others. As shown in the bar graph contained on page 66 of the Study, the average 9.2 FAR is the result of approximately ¼ of the sites between an 8 -8.9 FAR and approximately ¾ of the sites between an 9-9.7 FAR. These FARs are substantially below the 10 FAR that has been realized and planned in the past – and historically, the vehicle to incentive redevelopment. In addition, even the height graphic on page 72 of the Study references "height maximums" and many of those maximums are in the 200' range rather than at or above 300'. We are unaware of any C-O-Rosslyn approvals to date that had buildings approved at substantially less than a 10 FAR and 300 feet in height. This is a major policy change for Rosslyn.*

**6. Has the process considered other solutions to achieve the goals of producing the best ground plane, open space, light and air between buildings, view corridors, high quality architecture and a sculpted skyline?**

*The process has not considered other means to maintaining the density envisioned in Rosslyn, which was a fundamental principle put in place by the County Board at the inception of the Study, while achieving the other stated goals of the Study. That is, maintaining a 10 FAR across the board, with varying heights above and below 300 feet. The three prior scenarios that were part of the Study last year were thematically the same approach as the currently proposed approach.*

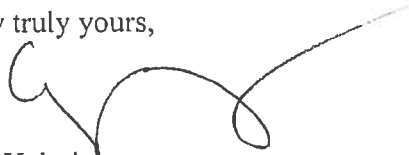
**7. Is the Study's building height and form approach flexible and able to accommodate site specific challenges that were not envisioned when the Study was prepared?**

*The Study to date has moved toward narrowing options to a single one, which is quite specific as to heights, massing, floor plates, building orientation and uses.*

In conclusion, Monday Properties does not believe that the current direction of the Realize Rosslyn Height and Massing Study balances the macro goals of: (1) providing each owner with feasible, desirable development options including market-driven floor plates and use mixes; (2) maximizing the collective value of development in the Rosslyn Coordinated Redevelopment District, including generating much needed tax dollars, preserving community benefit dollars and incentivizing redevelopment by preserving density and height; (3) maximizing benefits to and minimizing the negative impact on neighborhoods and parklands, which may require higher buildings to improve view corridors and the ground plane; and (4) developing a policy document that is fluid, flexible and realistic as to the communities' and developers' expectations and that can accommodate change in the market and site specific challenges as they come forth with each redevelopment plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Very truly yours,



Tim Helmig

- cc: Barbara M. Donnellan
- Gabriela Acurio
- Robert E. Brosnan
- Thomas H. Miller
- Anthony Fusarelli, Jr.
- Nan E. Walsh